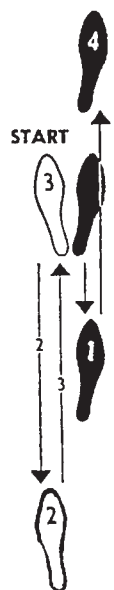


## How to Dance the Charleston



The Charleston, first introduced in 1924, quickly became the most popular dance of the 1920s. It is the perfect dance for jazz or Dixieland music written in 4/4 time. Try dancing to one of these popular 1920s tunes: "Charleston" or "Yes Sir! That's My Baby".

Now that you have found the music, it is time to learn the basic Charleston step—the kick. The step involves four steps, one step to each count of a 4/4 measure of music. Start with your feet together.

1. **Step back** with your **right** foot.
2. **Kick back** with your **left** foot.
3. **Step forward** with your **left** foot to original position.
4. **Kick forward** with your **right** foot.
5. **Repeat:** Return to step 1 where you step back with your right foot.

The arms also play an important role in dancing the Charleston. Try holding your arms straight out from your body and bending them at your elbows with hands pointing up. Swing your arms from the elbow, first to the **right** and then to the **left**. Combine this movement with the kickstep—and you are dancing the Charleston.

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# How to Dance the Charleston Lesson Plan

### Objective:

1. To learn how to dance the Charleston by following written instructions.

**Time:** 20 minutes.

### Materials:

1. "How to Dance the Charleston" activity sheet.
2. Cassette tape.
3. Cassette tape player.

### Directions:

1. **Distribute** the "How to Dance the Charleston" activity sheet.
2. **Review** the background information regarding the Charleston.
3. **Review** the written directions with students before trying the dance.
4. Students may **practice** individually, in pairs, or groups.
5. Once students have mastered the steps, have the entire class **try it** with music.

### Additional activities:

1. **Music:** Listen to both songs provided on the cassette tape. Discuss with students how jazz music is different from their favorite type of music.
2. **Videotape:** Videotape the dance after students have mastered it.
3. **Writing:** Have students write a journal entry or letter to a friend about the Charleston.

**Background information:** Dancing in the 1920s was always the main entertainment. Parties included dancing in their evening programs. Churches used dances to attract the young. Schools taught social dancing to small children. Flappers almost lived for dancing. The foxtrot, camel-walk, tango, and even square dancing were all popular. People were ready for something new. It came in 1924. It was called the Charleston. Appearing first in an Afro-American revue called *Runnin' Wild*, this dance became the dance of the '20s. It was an exhibition dance at first, considered too difficult for any but professionals to master, with its suddenly shifting rhythms and breathtaking pace. Yet, within a year it had swept the country. Its imprint continues today for when we think of the '20s we think of the Charleston—flying beads, knock knees, and crossing hands.

From *America in the Twenties* by Geoffrey Perrett, 1982.

### Links to standards

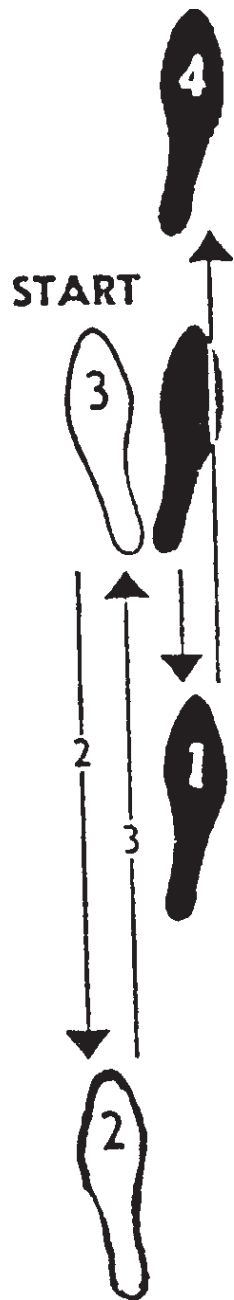
**Language Arts:** LS—1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.4

**Dance:** 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 3.2, 3.4

**Music:** 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 5.3

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